University of Wisconsin System

Guidance for Working Alone

Last Revised: January 2019

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1. Publishing Office(s)

This guidance document is maintained by the UW System Administration (UWSA) Office of Risk Management and is applicable to all UW institutions.

2. Affected Stakeholders on Campus

Campus departments that determine it is necessary for their employees or students to work alone in potentially hazardous environments or with hazardous materials or equipment are expected to actively participate in this guidance document. This guideline will be distributed to campus safety and risk managers, who will distribute it to affected departments on campus.

3. Primary Responsibility

- UWSA Office of Risk Management is responsible for ensuring the guidelines are distributed to the safety and risk managers on each campus.
- The campus safety and risk management departments are responsible for assisting campus departments.
- The campus departments that supervise the employee or student who will be working alone are responsible for administering and adhering to the guidelines.

4. Guidelines

A. Purpose

The UWSA Office of Risk Management recommends that each campus develop and implement specific written procedures to ensure the safety of employees and students who work alone in a potentially hazardous environment or with hazardous materials or equipment to minimize potential risks of injury.

B. Definition of "Working Alone"

Individuals are working alone when they cannot be seen or heard by another employee or supervisor, cannot expect a visit from another worker for some time, and/or where assistance is not readily available when needed.

C. Best Practices for University Employees and Students

It is generally inappropriate for undergraduate students to work alone. Exceptions may be made for low-risk work if the faculty verifies that an individual student is qualified and that best practices (listed below) are adhered to.

When it is necessary for an employee or student to work alone in a potentially hazardous environment, the campus department should assess the task(s) and take preventive measures to eliminate or minimize risks. Individual departments are primarily responsible for completing necessary Job Safety Analyses (JSA) and should consult their campus safety and risk offices for assistance.
Employees and students should work only under conditions where the availability of emergency aid and communication systems are compatible with the risk.

Best practices for any situation where employees or students work alone involve:

- Assessing work area hazards to identify potential or existing hazards by completing a JSA.
- Assessing the requirements for emergency equipment, emergency aid and practical means of obtaining assistance based upon the nature and degree of exposure to the hazard.
- Ensuring emergency aid is available and compatible with work assignments.
- Ensuring the employee or student understands and is fully trained on emergency procedures.
- Providing an effective communication system between any individual who works alone and person(s) capable of assisting the employee or student.
- Ensuring a point of contact is aware of the individual's location and the timeframe they will be at the location while working alone.
- Implementing procedures and taking corrective actions to eliminate, minimize or control hazards of working alone.
- Training and educating employees and students to follow all safety instructions provided, adhere to appropriate measures established for working alone, and be aware of the hazards and methods used to control or eliminate them so work can be performed safely.
- Evaluating safety measures on a regular basis to ensure that these measures are effective, considering any new changes in work tasks or operations.
- Ensuring incidents are reported, investigated and documented.
- Reporting all accidents of work site incidents immediately to campus security.

D. After-hours Access

A system of after-hours permits and procedures can help prevent untrained persons from gaining access to laboratories and other hazardous locations within campus buildings. However, after-hours permits will not contribute directly to assuring safety when working alone. Therefore, departments should ensure that prior to the employee or student working alone best practices have been met.

E. Appendices

- Appendix A: Potentially Hazardous Campus Activities
- Appendix B: Process Flow Chart
- Appendix C: Job Safety Analysis: Example

5. Contact

- UWSA Office of Risk Management
- The Safety and Risk Management Office on campus

6. Guideline History

Revision 3: January 2019
Revision 2: October 2007
Revision 1: May 2006
Original Issuance: May – December 2005

7. Scheduled Review

Next scheduled review date: January 2021

APPENDIX A
Potentially Hazardous Campus Activities

There are potentially hazardous activities on each campus and the risk may increase when an employee or student works alone in these activities. Based on specific hazard assessments the campus should determine if the hazards can be mitigated and whether such activities should be closely monitored, restricted or outright disallowed. The following are a few examples of hazardous activities, operations, and conditions that are common on campus. Each campus should determine other hazards that are not included in the list below.

Potentially Hazardous Activities:

- Work involving flammable and combustible material
- Work with equipment under high pressure
- Work with cryogens or infectious agents
- Work with hazardous or toxic chemicals
- Work with heavy machinery or equipment
- Work with portable and stationary power tools
- Welding, hot work and similar operations
- Electrical work and high energy
- Working at heights
- Work with lasers and certain radioactive materials
- Work with infectious sharps or moving blades
- High temperature cooking equipment, ovens, and kilns
- Field studies, including the use of watercraft, traps, nets, and live specimens, poisonous plants/animals, and work with research animals
- Handling cash
- Work in remote or isolated areas
- Extreme weather conditions
- Laboratory functions

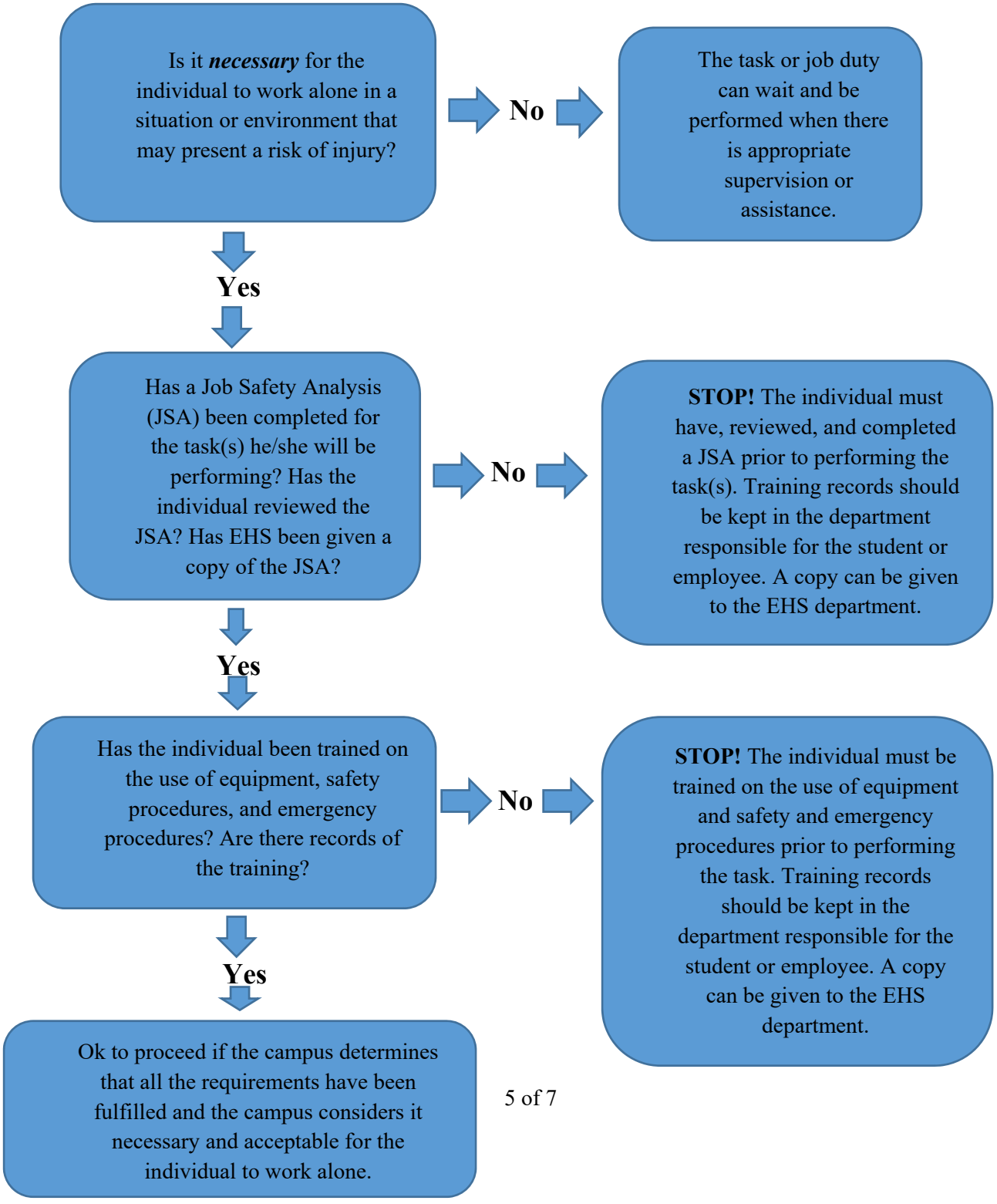
Examples of campus departments in which working alone under certain conditions may present risk of injury:

- Natural and Physical Sciences
    - Chemicals, flammables, combustibles, acids, bases, gases, lasers, radioactive material, pathogens, live specimens, radiation sources, farm equipment, electrical hazards, extreme weather conditions
- Visual and Performing Arts (Theatre, Art, etc.)
    - Power tools, handling cash, silica, dusts, heights, chemicals, hot work
- Physical Plant, Heating Plant, Building and Grounds
    - High temperatures, high noise, hot work, electrical work, power tools, chemicals and solvents, heights, flammables, high pressures, confined spaces, radiation sources, heavy machinery, high energy equipment, poisonous plants/animals, work in remote or isolated areas, extreme weather conditions
- Food Services
    - High temperatures, unguarded equipment (mixers, bakeries), dealing with the public, handling cash
- Athletic Facilities
    - Heavy equipment, dealing with the public, handling cash, extreme weather conditions

APPENDIX B

PROCESS FLOW CHART: Students and Employees Working Alone

This flow chart will assist in determining the procedures and practices that should be administered when a campus department approves a student or employee to work alone in a situation or environment that may present a risk of injury.



APPENDIX C

Job Safety Analysis: Example

JOB SAFETY ANALYSIS	**JOB TITLE:** Compactor Operator **JSA No.** _____ **Page 1 of 1**		**DATE:**	**NEW:** **REVISED:**
	TITLE OF PERSON WHO DOES JOB: Grounds Crew	**SUPERVISOR:** Robert Smith	**ANALYSIS PERFOMED BY:**	
ORGANIZATION:	**LOCATION:** Refuse Collection	**DEPARTMENT:** Grounds	**REVIEWED BY:** Jane Doe, EHS Manager	

SEQUENCE OF BASIC JOB STEPS	POTENTIAL HAZARDS	RECOMMENDED ACTION OR PROCEDURE
1. Pull/push full dumpster into hydraulic lift gate.	• Lower back, arm, and shoulder strain. • Pinched hand between gate and rolling dumpster. • Hitting head on horizontal gate member.	• Repair/improve condition of lot pavement. • Install larger wheels or properly inflate existing wheels. • Push dumpster to move, pull to steer/guide. • Wear protective canvas or leather gloves. • Install plugs to drain water from dumpster. • Use a tugger or other motorized cart to move dumpsters.
2. Raise hydraulic lift gate to "UP" position, dumping contents.	• None observed.	• None observed.
3. Spray remaining trash residue from raised dumpster with water.	• Trash particles and water spray into eyes.	• ANSI approved eye or face protection when spraying/cleaning the dumpster.
4. Lower hydraulic lift gate and emptied dumpster back to ground level.	• Crushing injury if a person is under the lowering gate.	• Install an automatic lowering alarm. • Install an emergency-stop button on gate frame. • Install a physical barrier across entrance of gate frame to prevent entry.
5. Pull empty dumpster from the gate to the designated area for placement on the grounds.	• Lower back, arm, and shoulder strain.	• Repair/improve condition of lot pavement. • Install larger wheels or properly inflate existing wheels. • Push dumpsters to move, pull to steer/guide. • Wear protective canvas or leather gloves.